

December 19, 2003

Mr. Martin D. Chavez, Jr.
Forest Supervisor
208 Cruz Alta Road
Taos, New Mexico 87571

Dear Mr. Chavez:

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 6 has reviewed the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the proposed surface management of gas leasing and development for Jicarilla Ranger District, Carson National Forest Rio Arriba County, New Mexico. The project will amend the Forest Plan to include standards and guidelines related to gas leasing and development in Jacarilla Ranger District.

EPA rates the DEIS as "LO," i.e., EPA has "**Lack of Objections**" to the proposed action as described in the DEIS with appropriate mitigation. The proposed action will incorporate site specific Conditions of Approval (COA) in any any application to drill a gas well. These conditions will include standard mitigation measures and best management practices, such as conducting cultural resource surveys prior to a site-specific NEPA decision for ground-disturbing undertakings, avoiding cultural resources, mitigating adverse impacts prior to construction, stabilizing disturbed sites, and maintaining roads. The Forest service will also participate in the Four Corners Ozone Task Force, a regional air quality monitoring effort created to identify site-specific COA's to protect air quality. The Force Service has agreed to cooperate by assuring implementation of Task Force recommended mitigation measures and including them in any approved Application Permit to Drill.

Our classification will be published in the Federal Register according to our responsibility under Section 309 of the Clean Air Act to inform the public of our views on proposed Federal actions. If you have any questions, please contact Mike Jansky of my staff at 214-665-7451 for assistance.

EPA appreciates the opportunity to review the DEIS. Please send our office five copies of the FEIS when it is sent to the Office of Federal Activities, EPA (Mail Code 2252A), Ariel Rios Building, 1200 Pennsylvania Ave, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20460.

Sincerely yours,

Michael P. Jansky, P.E.
Regional EIS Coordinator